

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SES-02
SAA-01 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
MCT-02 /109 W

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P R 231359Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9365
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4898

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, LE, SY, PINT
SUBJECT: REMARKS OF ADF COMMANDER SAMI KHATIB ON THE CURRENT
SITUATION

1. CHARGE AND EMBOFF MET AUGUST 23 WITH LT COL SAMI KHATIB,
THE NOMINAL LEBANESE COMMANDER OF THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE
(ADF), AT THE LATTER'S OFFICE NEAR MUSEUM. KHATIB SAID THE
FOLLOWING.

2. THERE WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE ANY MORE MAJOR FIGHTING BETWEEN
CHRISTIANS AND SYRIANS IN EAST BEIRUT BEFORE THE END OF THE
CAMP DAVID SUMMIT. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN AFTERWARDS WAS UNPREDICT-
ABLE. THE SOLUTION FOR EAST BEIRUT WOULD HAVE TO BE POLITICAL.

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A MILITARY SOLUTION, ALTHOUGH ABSTRACTLY POSSIBLE, WAS NOT
REALLY FEASIBLE.

3. THE AUGUST 9 DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT PROVIDED FOR THE WITH-
DRAWAL OF CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN FROM THE STREETS OF ASHRAFIYAH.
IN RETURN, THE SYRIANS PROMISED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE SIX
POSITIONS THEY HELD IN THE EASTERN PART OF ASHRAFIYAH.

4. THE SYRIANS HAD MADE NO OTHER PROMISES, IMPLIED OR EXPLICIT. SPECIFICALLY THEY HAD NOT PROMISED TO EVACUATE THE RIZK TOWER. INDEED, THE SYRIANS WOULD NOT WITHDRAW FROM THE RIZK TOWER UNTIL LEBANON HAD BUILT A STRONG NATIONAL ARMY WHICH COULD CONTROL THE TOWER AND BE WILLING TO TAKE ON ALL COMERS, INCLUDING THE PHALANGE. IF THE SYRIANS WITHDREW FROM THE TOWER BEFORE THEN, THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WOULD OCCUPY IT AND BE ABLE TO TERRORIZE ALL OF BEIRUT. (KHATIB REFRAINED FROM PREDICTING HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE TO BUILD SUCH AN ARMY, BUT SAID THAT A GOOD, ALTHOUGH SMALL BEGINNING HAD BEEN MADE. HE SAID OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS HAD REMAINED LOYAL TO THE ARMY DURING THE JULY-AUGUST FIGHTING, WHEN ONLY 20 TO 30 PEOPLE FROM THE ARMY HAD FOUGHT ON THE SIDE OF THE CHRISTIANS.)

5. THE SYRIANS HAD ALSO NOT AGREED TO WITHDRAW FROM QARANTINA BRIDGE, JISR AL BASHA, THE SIN AL-FIL BRIDGE OR THE OTHER ENTRANCES TO BEIRUT. THE SYRIANS HAD MADE VERY PLAIN THAT THEY WOULD NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, ABANDON CONTROL OF THESE ENTRANCES, SINCE TO DO SO WOULD MEAN GIVING UP COMPLETELY CONTROL OF THE CITY'S SECURITY. IF THE SYRIANS GAVE UP CONTROL OF THE ENTRANCES, THE MILITIAS COULD DRIVE IN TANKS IF THEY WISHED.

6. THE SYRIANS HAD KEPT THEIR PART OF THE BARGAIN AND HAD WITHDRAWN COMPLETELY FROM EASTERN ASHRAFIYAH TO THE RIZK TOWER AND EIGHT OTHER POSITIONS NEAR IT. THE SYRIANS HAD ALSO WITH-
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DRAWN FROM QARANTINA BRIDGE ITSELF, ALTHOUGH SYRIAN UNITS STATIONED NEAR THE BRIDGE MAINTAINED EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF IT. THE CHRISTIANS INSTEAD OF WITHDRAWING FROM THE STREETS HAD ADVANCED AND ESTABLISHED NEW POSITIONS IN THE RIZK TOWER AREA.

7. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION OF CHARGE, KHATIB ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN INCREASE OF KIDNAPPINGS AND CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN WEST BEIRUT BY LOCAL PARTIES AND GANGS. THE ADF ON AUGUST 19 HAD THEREFORE TAKEN MEASURES TO TIGHTEN SECURITY IN THE AREA. SPECIFICALLY, THE ADF HAD INCREASED THE NUMBER OF ROVING PATROLS, BUT NOT THE NUMBER OF SOLDIERS IN WEST BEIRUT. THERE WOULD BE A MEETING THIS AFTERNOON TO TAKE FURTHER STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTING THESE MEASURES. THE ADF HAD TWO BRIGADES COMMITTED TO THE WEST BEIRUT AREA, INCLUDING SUBURBS SUCH AS KHALDE.

8. A FACTION OF THE PHALANGE PARTY WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FIRING OF RIFLE GRENADES AT THE PORT, BUT IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHICH FACTION. ONE RPG HAD HIT THE PORT AT ABOUT 10:30 HOURS THIS MORNING (AUGUST 23).

9. KHATIB THEN LAUNCHED INTO A LONG DENUNCIATION OF THE EVILS

OF BACHIR GEMAYEL, HEAD OF THE UNIFIED COMMAND OF THE CHRIST-
IAN MILITIAS. ACCORDING TO KHATIB, BACHIR DID NOT REPRESENT
ALL OF THE PHALANGE PARTY, WHICH DID NOT REPRESENT ALL OF THE
LEBANESE FRONT, WHICH DID NOT REPRESENT ALL OF THE MARONITES,
WHO DID NOT REPRESENT ALL THE CHRISTIANS.

10. KHATIB COMMENTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD DONE ABSOLUTELY
THE RIGHT THING IN ORDERING AMERICAN DEPENDENTS OUT OF LEBANON,
DESPITE THE FLURRY IT PROVOKED LOCALLY. CHARGE ASKED WHEN WE
COULD BRING WIVES BACK. KHATIB REPLIED, "ASK BACHIR."
KINSOLVING

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